

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY

In the Matter of Massachusetts Telecommunications and Energy's Petition for Waiver of Section 52.19 to Implement Various Area Code Reservation Methods in the 508, 617, 781 and 978 area codes.

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99-99

REPLY COMMENTS OF

AT&T COMMUNICATIONS OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Introduction.

Pursuant to the Order of the Department of Telecommunications and Energy (the "Department") dated October 12, 1999 ("October 12 Order"), AT&T Communications of New England, Inc. ("AT&T") on behalf of itself and its affiliates - including but not limited to Wireless PCS, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of AT&T Wireless Services, Inc., d/b/a AT&T Wireless Services - hereby submits these reply comments concerning the Department's proposal to implement a thousands-block number pooling trial in the Metropolitan Statistical Area ("MSA") encompassing Greater Boston, consistent with the authority granted the Department by the Federal Communications Commission (the "FCC").⁽¹⁾

As discussed below, AT&T shares the view of several parties that commencement of a pooling trial in Massachusetts prior to the availability of Number Portability Administration Center ("NPAC") Release 3.0 could negatively affect network reliability and ultimately undermine the Department's efforts to conserve numbers. The limitations inherent in the current pooling software should be taken into account when determining the optimum date for launching pooling, as well as the speed at which any authorized trial is expanded to new markets. In addition, a pooling trial can be made more efficient by initially limiting the trial to uncontaminated thousand number blocks. As discussed herein, AT&T urges the Department to adopt the existing industry pooling guidelines with this limited modification, and to institute utilization measures that take account of a carriers' "months-to-exhaust" projections when determining when a carrier is eligible for blocks from the pool.

Argument.

I. POOLING BEFORE THE NEW NPAC SOFTWARE IS AVAILABLE MAY CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT RESOLVES.

A number of parties identify serious concerns about the efficacy of pooling through use of currently available software, NPAC Release 1.4. As MCI points out, for example, version 1.4 was developed for the limited purpose of conducting a pooling trial in the Illinois 847 NPA.⁽²⁾ It requires manual processes, which could overburden carrier systems if used extensively, and creates too many data records per NXX to manage on a large scale.⁽³⁾ Indeed, Sprint PCS explains that, with Release 1.4, each pooled number is stored as a separate record in every carrier's number portability database (or Signal Control Point).⁽⁴⁾ Network reliability and the ability to route calls to completion could be jeopardized if the demands for storing ported numbers exceeds the capacity of carrier's databases.⁽⁵⁾ Bell Atlantic adds that Release 1.4 contains only four percent of the documented national NPAC standards for pooling, whereas the new version 3.0 is fully compliant.⁽⁶⁾ Moreover, conversion from version 1.4 to version 3.0, which is scheduled to be deployed by the end of 2000, could be very risky. According to MCI, "[n]o process has been developed, or even suggested, by which these [sic] conversion can occur."⁽⁷⁾

While AT&T understands the Department's desire to implement pooling in Massachusetts at the earliest possible date, it is not clear how much would be gained by moving ahead with a trial prior to the deployment of Release 3.0. The extensive changes to network software and operations support systems ("OSS") required for pooling, as well as the imminent onset of the Year 2000 "quiet period," means that most carriers could not begin the testing and implementation of pooling until March 2000 at the earliest. In light of the capacity constraints associated with the currently available manual software, in addition to the risks of network failure upon conversion from Release 1.4 to Release 3.0, it seems to make more sense to defer pooling in Massachusetts for a few additional months. At the very least, AT&T urges the Commission to limit any trial it launches prior to the release of national guidelines and version 3.0 to a single MSA (the greater Boston MSA) as directed by the FCC,⁽⁸⁾ and to implementing pooling one NPA at a time, as recommended by AT&T in its initial comments.⁽⁹⁾

Bell Atlantic's proposal that the Department order carriers to begin contributing to the pool as soon as they are able, even though Bell Atlantic itself asserts that it will not be prepared to participate until after the release of NPAC Release 3.0 is unreasonable, inequitable and anticompetitive. Without the participation of the incumbent carrier, it is unclear whether a sufficient number pool can even be established. Moreover, Bell Atlantic asks the Department to order CLECs to begin pooling under the more costly and burdensome R1.4, which will also cause them to incur the burden and expense to convert to R3.0 when it is released, but to allow Bell Atlantic the freedom to focus preparing its systems for the implementation of R3.0 next year. Any equitable pooling trial should include all LNP/pooling capable carriers on the same terms and schedule.

I. POOLING CAN BE MADE MORE EFFICIENT AND LESS DISRUPTIVE BY INITIALLY LIMITING THE TRIAL TO UNCONTAMINATED BLOCKS.

The carriers' initial comments make clear that the work required to initiate number pooling is substantial and time-consuming. In order to promote a timely, efficient, and less disruptive pooling trial, AT&T recommends that the Department initially require LNP capable carriers to donate only their uncontaminated blocks to the number pool.⁽¹⁰⁾ The exclusion of contaminated blocks will save the time required for intra-service provider porting in lightly contaminated thousand number blocks before pooling can commence.⁽¹¹⁾ Limiting pooling initially to uncontaminated blocks will also relieve donating carriers of the burden of internally porting the contaminated numbers, and the pool administrator and receiving carrier of the need to track the numbers. Among other benefits, such a pooling trial would reduce the number of new number categories that carriers' systems will be required to recognize for the initial trial.⁽¹²⁾ During this initial roll-out period, carriers should be encouraged to follow thousands block administration principles to maximize the number of lightly contaminated blocks that can be collected at a later date.

II. APART FROM ORDERING POOLING INITIALLY OF ONLY UNCONTAMINATED BLOCKS, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ADOPT THE EXISTING INDUSTRY GUIDELINES FOR POOLING WITHOUT PROPOSING CHANGES.

In its initial comments, Sprint PCS urges the Department to issue an order soon identifying any changes that it propose to make to the industry-developed pooling guidelines.⁽¹³⁾ Apart from initially limiting pooling to uncontaminated thousand number blocks, AT&T recommends that the Department adopt the existing industry guidelines.⁽¹⁴⁾ The technical requirements established by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions T1S1.6 Working Group resolve all significant technical issues associated with pooling. Moreover, the FCC has directed the Department to implement its pooling trial in a manner consistent with industry guidelines.⁽¹⁵⁾ Any attempt by the Department to establish new guidelines or requirements would create incompatibility with other states and cause complications

for carriers, while delaying unnecessarily delay the commencement of polling in Massachusetts. Should the Department nevertheless decide to propose changes to the guidelines, AT&T joins Sprint PCS in urging the Department to identify such proposed changes soon, in order to permit the carriers an opportunity to comment on such proposals,⁽¹⁶⁾ with the goal of establishing the ground rules for pooling as soon as possible.

III. A MONTHS-TO-EXHAUST MEASURE FOR DETERMINING WHEN CARRIERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO OBTAIN THOUSAND NUMBER BLOCKS FROM THE POOL IS VITAL TO ENSURE THAT CARRIERS WHO REALLY NEED NUMBERS RECEIVE THEM.

Finally, the carriers' initial comments make clear the importance of including a "months-to-exhaust" component in any criteria that the Department establishes for determining when a carrier is eligible to obtain thousand number blocks from the pool. Nearly every commenter that responded to the Department's request for comments on the use of "fill factors" or utilization rates recommended that the Department adopt a months-to-exhaust measure either instead of, or in conjunction with, a fill factor measure.⁽¹⁷⁾ As AT&T and other commenters stressed, a months-to-exhaust measure must be employed because a carrier's fill or utilization rate alone is not a reliable indicator of a carriers' actual need for numbering resources. In order to determine whether a carrier requires additional numbers the Department must look at not only the carrier's fill rate, but also at how many available numbers the carrier has in its inventory and the carrier's historical and projected activation rate. This is critical because a carrier with rapidly growing demand in a particular NPA may need additional resources for future growth even before reaching the designated "fill" threshold, whereas a carrier experiencing slower (or no) growth with current utilization at or above the threshold may not need new numbers. It is thus very important that the Department adopt a utilization measure based on a months-to-exhaust analysis. In the event that the Department decides not to adopt a measure based solely on months-to-exhaust, AT&T recommends that the Department adopt its proposed hybrid utilization measure, incorporating both a fill factor and months-to-exhaust component.⁽¹⁸⁾

Conclusion.

AT&T fully supports the Department's efforts to optimize the use of telephone numbers in Massachusetts, and encourages the Department to adopt number conservation measures, consistent with AT&T's recommendations herein and in its Initial Comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: November 1, 1999.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I caused a true copy of the above document to be served upon the attorney of record for each other party on November 1, 1999.

1. 1 *See Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy's Petition for Waiver of Section 52.19 to Implement Various Area Code Conservation Measures in the 508, 617, 781 and 978 Area Codes*, CC Docket No. 96-98, Order, NSD File No. L-99-19, Order, FCC 99-246 (rel. Sept. 15, 1999) ("*FCC Delegation Order*").

2. 2 Initial Comments of MCI WorldCom, Inc. ("MCI Initial Comments"), at 8.

3. 3 *Id.*

4. 4 Sprint PCS Comments Concerning Number Pooling ("Sprint PCS Comments") at 8.

5. 5 *Id.* at 9.

6. 6 Initial Comments of Bell Atlantic-Massachusetts ("BA Initial Comments") at 7.

7. 7 MCI Initial Comments at 9.

8. 8 *FCC Delegation Order*, ¶ 19.

9. 9 Initial Comments of AT&T Communications of New England, Inc. at 10-11. Indeed, the FCC suggests concentrating pooling trials in those NPAs which are the best candidates for pooling. *See FCC Delegation Order*, ¶ 21.

10. 10 Bell Atlantic recommends that the Department initially seed the pool with full NXX codes, to avoid "risking customer harm from inadvertent donation of numbers that are assigned already to customers." BA Initial Comments at 7. A proposal to use full NXX codes to seed the pool makes no sense in NPAs, such as the 617 NPA, that are in jeopardy of exhaust. All available full NXX codes in jeopardy NPAs are needed to assure that non-LNP capable carriers have sufficient numbers, and should not be used in such cases to seed the pool. Bell Atlantic's goal of minimizing customer disruption can be achieved by initially limiting the pool, as AT&T suggests, to uncontaminated thousand number blocks.

11. 11 *See* Thousand Block (NXX-X) Pooling Administration Guidelines, Draft (INC 99-0127-023) (rev. Aug. 30, 1999) ("INC Guidelines"), §§ 8.1.7, 8.1.8.

12. 12 *See* Tr. 10/21/99 at 95-96.

13. 13 Sprint PCS Comments at 6-7.

14. 14 *See* INC Guidelines.

15. 15 *FCC Delegation Order*, ¶ 14.

16. 16 The FCC has directed the Department to consult with carriers concerning any proposed changes to the industry guidelines. *Id.*

17. 17 *See* AT&T Initial Comments at 6-8; BA Initial Comments at 17-19; MCI Initial Comments at 7-8; Sprint PCS Comments at 12-13; Thousands Block Number Pooling Trial Comments of MediaOne Telecommunications of Massachusetts, Inc. at 3-4; Comments of Nextel Communications, Inc. Pursuant to the Department's Request for Written Comments at 2-3.

18. 18 *See* AT&T Initial Comments at 7-8.